

ISC-AB Vaccine Update July 20, 2021

General Updates:

- As of July 19, 2021, there have been 232,875 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Alberta. Of these cases – 606 are active and 98 individuals are in hospital (27 in ICU). Sadly, 2,318 people in Alberta have passed away due to COVID-19.
- As of July 19, 2021, there have been 9,017 probable and confirmed on-reserve cases of COVID-19. Of these total cases – 8,884 have recovered and 44 are active cases in 14 First Nation communities. There are 14 individuals in hospital (8 in ICU) and, sadly, 90, individuals have passed away. As of July 19, one community has 10 or more active cases. The majority of First Nation communities in Alberta have less than five active cases at this time.
- As of July 18, 2021, 5,056,062 vaccine doses have been administered across Alberta. Approximately, 74.8% of the population age 12 and older has received at least one dose (63.6% of the total population) and approximately 59.7% are fully immunized (50.8% of the population).
- As of July 18 – over 61,500 immunizations have been administered in First Nation communities in Alberta, with approximately 35,076 first doses and 26,463 second doses. Approximately, 54.7% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received at least one dose and approximately 41.3% are fully immunized. There have been 543 refusals and 831 doses wasted. The wastage numbers are very low compared to other vaccines (i.e. influenza, routine childhood immunizations etc.).
- Overall, active cases continue to decline across the province. As of July 19, 2021, the 7-day average positivity rate in Alberta is 0.88%.
- At this time, approximately two-thirds of active variant cases in Alberta are the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant. It is anticipated that the Delta variant will become the dominant COVID-19 strain in Alberta in the coming weeks.
- Public health officials have reported two cases of the C.37 (Lambda) variant in Alberta as of July 18, 2021. Both cases are travel related.
- As of July 18, 2021 (see attached document that uses Indian Registry data for the population age 12 and older living on reserve as the denominator):
 - 12-17 year olds: Approximately 36.2% first doses, 19.9% second doses.
 - 18-34 year olds: Approximately 39.3% first doses, 27.3% second doses.
 - 35-49 year olds: Approximately 61.1% first doses, 47.4% second doses.
 - 50-64 year olds: Approximately 79.3% first doses, 66.5% second doses.
 - 65+ year olds: Approximately 91.7% first doses, 82.9% second doses.
 - Rate of immunization by Treaty Area:
 - Treaty 6: Approximately 40.9% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose and 31.4% have received two doses.
 - Treaty 7: Approximately 74% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose and 56.7% have received two doses.
 - Treaty 8: Approximately 55.3% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose and 40.3% have received two doses.
- From May to June, ISC-AB was seeing 2,500-2,800 doses administered on reserve per week. In the last few weeks, 1,100-1,400 doses have been administered per week.

- Although the number of doses has recently decreased, the numbers remain steady and there has been growth in first doses, which is encouraging. Seeing continued vaccinations is a testament to the hard work of First Nations health staff.
- Although the province used 70% immunization rate as the threshold for reopening, ISC-AB encourages First Nation communities to try to reach a rate of 80-90% in light of the Delta variant. ISC-AB estimates an additional 13,000 doses are needed to ensure 70% of the population age 12 and older in each community have received at least one vaccine dose.
- ISC-AB reporting uses Indian Registry data for the population age 12 and older living on reserve as the denominator for vaccine reporting. If any health directors have questions or feedback on this data, or do not think this denominator accurately reflects the population in their Nation, please reach out to Dr. Parminder Thiara to discuss alternatives to determine vaccine coverage rates more accurately.
- The ISC-AB Communications team has developed an infographic for health directors and communities to use in disseminating information about vaccine efficacy and outcomes. This document should be sent out to health directors and community staff by the end of the day (July 20).
- On July 16, 2021, the First Nations Network hosted a presentation by AHS on long COVID-19 and the ongoing response. The presentation is available at <https://fntn.ca/>.
- In June, Moderna submitted an application to Health Canada to seek approval for vaccine for 12-17 years olds. Approval from Health Canada is pending and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) is developing guidance.
- Pfizer is currently running clinical trials for vaccines in children under 12. The results of the clinical trials may be available by end of August or September. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated there is a global need to prioritize first doses for adults at this time.
- The text message alert system for vaccine check up (the active surveillance system for adverse events in CHIP) is currently being piloted in three communities. The pilot program will be reviewed before being rolled out to further communities in the coming weeks. If community members opt in, they will receive texts asking about side effects and adverse outcomes they may be experiencing following their vaccinations.

Vaccine Clinic Update:

- There are no operational changes at this time.
- ISC-AB has ordered more TempTales (temperature monitors to ensure cold storage of vaccines). We hope to have them delivered to communities by late August or early September, as the current supply will expire at the end of September.

Questions:

- ***Is there an update on the interchangeability of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines for first and second doses?***
 - Regarding vaccine interchangeability, NACI recommends that vaccine types should remain consistent where possible. However, mRNA vaccines could be interchanged if the vaccine used for first dose is not readily accessible for a second dose.

- ***Is there an update on the need for booster shots, i.e. to improve immunity against the Delta and Lambda variants?***
 - We will potentially see messaging on booster shots for immunocompromised individuals in the coming weeks. In response to variants, current information indicates that two vaccine doses are proving effective against the Delta variant, and research into the Lambda variant is ongoing. We do not anticipate receiving broader messaging on booster shots in the immediate future.

- ***Question from Dr. Thiara: ISC-AB and health directors are still addressing first-dose plateaus in First Nation communities, and are continuing to focus on pop up/mobile clinics. Does anyone have comments or experiences from the last month that they would like to share?***
 - Bonny Graham (Maskwacis Health Services): We are continuing door-to-door immunizations this week. There are many houses to cover and it has been a lot of hard work, but seeing people being immunized who may have had to wait longer or may not have been immunized otherwise is encouraging.

- ***Question from Dr. Thiara: As we do not anticipate frequent updates or changes at this time, should we move this meeting to every three weeks?***
 - Agreed upon by group.
 - We can potentially address the upcoming influenza campaign and childhood vaccines at the next meeting in addition to COVID-19 vaccine updates.

Thank you all for your continued hard work and dedication. We will meet again on **Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 1:00pm.**